DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 379 217 SP 035 710

AUTHOR Manke, Mary Phillips
TITLE Teacher Organization of Time and Space in the Classroom as an Aspect of the Construction of Classroom Power Relationships.
PUB DATE Apr 94
NOTE 33p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (New Orleans, LA, April 4-8, 1994).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Class Organization; Classroom Design; Classroom Environment; Classroom Research; Classroom Techniques; Elementary Education; Elementary School Students; Elementary School Teachers; Ethnography; Grade 1; Grade 5; Higher Education; Individual Power; *Power Structure; Public Schools; *Space Utilization; Student Reaction; Teacher Expectations of Students; Teacher Influence; *Teacher Role; *Teacher Student Relationship; *Time Management
IDENTIFIERS *Teacher Power

ABSTRACT

An ethnographic study of three public elementary school classrooms explored how teachers organized time and space and through this organization attempted to construct classroom power relationships. The study involved intensive observation of classroom interactions in two fifth-grade classes and one first-grade classroom and close analysis of videotapes of two of the classrooms. The videotapes were used for stimulated-recall interviews with two of the teachers; an in-depth interview was conducted with the third teacher. All the teachers were white women, two with 20 years experience and one with 5 years experience. The first fifth-grade classroom was arranged so that students had little opportunity to move about. In the other two classrooms, much more physical freedom was afforded the students. The classrooms also differed in the amount of time that the teachers devoted to highly structured, as opposed to more loosely structured, activities. Yet it was clear that in every case the arrangements the teacher had made were consonant with her beliefs about how children can best learn, and therefore were enactments of her agenda to control student actions in order to facilitate student learning. The study showed clearly that teachers have an institutional role that allows them to make contributions to power relationships through their organization of time and space. The amount of structure built into the learning activities available in the classroom also shapes power relationships effectively. Nevertheless, students find ways to resist teacher control, to create "seams" in environments and activities, and to use those "seams" to make their own contributions to power relationships. (Contains 20 references.) (JB)

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Mary Phillips Manke
National-Louis University

Paper presented at the Annual Meetings
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New Orleans, April, 1994

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Classroom Power Relationships

Mary Phillips Manke
National-Louis University

This paper is rooted in an ethnographic study of how teachers and students construct power relationships in the elementary school classroom. Among the resources available to teachers in this process are the organization of time and of space. Teachers are responsible for the physical arrangement of classrooms (within limits imposed by building architecture and by the equipment available), and for decisions about the kinds of activities which will fill the classroom day. During my close observations of three classrooms in the last five years, one of the things I reflected on was how and to what end teachers were using these resources.

Background of the research

Agendas in the classroom. Underlying this research is the hypothesis that teachers and students bring to the classroom differing agendas which can be summarized as follows: teachers are seeking to control student actions in order to facilitate student learning; students are seeking to act without the constraints of adult responsibility. This hypothesis is essentially that of Fraatz (1987), who describes the student agenda as one of seeking to have "an interesting day." (p. 31) (One might suppose that an interesting day could include learning, and that in an ideal situation the teacher and student

agendas would coincide. The exploration of this idea, however, is not part of this study.) In any case, McDermott and Tylbor (1986) introduce a more complex vision of how agendas operate in group interaction: that of "collusion." They conceive of conflicting personal agendas which are concealed by publicly agreed-on agendas, privately known (to differing degrees by differing individuals) to be "not what is really going on." In the classrooms I observed, the publicly agreed-on agenda appeared to be: We are here to cooperate with one another in learning, or perhaps, We are here to maintain positive social relations [while we learn.]

Many actions of teachers as they carry out an agenda of controlling student behavior and promoting student learning occur in direct interaction with students; some are planned and created in advance and outside the students' view. It is these "invisible" (Hustler and Payne, 1982) arrangements, and students' response to them, that I focus on here.

Defining Power. The understanding of the nature of power that I bring to this analysis is deeply constructivist. I understand power as a structure of relationships developed out of the individual actions of teachers and students. This kind of definition of power is found in the thinking of activists of twenty years ago, who wished to make clear that people traditionally considered "powerless" in fact had power. Janeway (1980), for example, in her The Powers of the Weak, identifies power as process, both causing and reflecting change. "[Power's]

steady existence derives from ceaseless shifts and tensions, its balance is maintained by...the practical actions that grow out of compromises and confrontations...." (p. 3). This concept seems to resonate with Foucault's description of power as a "web in whose interstices human beings dwell." (Foucault, 1980, p. 99) This relational understanding rescues power from its status (March, 1966) as "a disappointing concept" and as simply a way of explaining the residual variance in outcomes. (p. 70)

Even though this discussion of power relationships is focused closely on the defined and self-contained interactional site of the classroom itself, it is true that the interactive construction of power relationships, and indeed of all aspects of life in the classroom, takes place within the constraints of a larger society. The school community, the local community, the larger communities of state and nation all surround the classroom and limit and influence what takes place within it. Frequently, these limits and influences have been the focus of studies of power relationships in schools.

Such influences are felt through imposed curricula and rules and expressed expectations, yet must be mediated by the actions and choices of students and teachers. Less directly, they act through each individual in the classroom, because each has been shaped by them. From interactions in the larger society, as well as from those in the classroom, individuals learn patterns, possibilities, roles, and actions which will be brought to bear in the classroom. Students and teachers have their own needs

which they are seeking to meet, and also their own stock of information and experience which guides them when they act.

Some of these cultural or societal influences which shape individual students and teachers are shared by several, many or all members of the group, and therefore may seem to have a broader influence within the classroom. Yet my analysis is based on the belief that such influence is actualized only through individual members and their actions, and has no avenue for making a separate contribution to the building of power relationships. (This is not to deny the existence of the shadow that exterior structures cast over classroom life, but rather to call into question its magical efficacy. For example, even though a member may hold racist beliefs, it is not until -- by word, action, or gesture -- those beliefs are enacted that they have an influence in the classroom.) Therefore I focus my attention on the individual actions observed in the classroom, and not on the complex influences outside the classroom that putatively work on them.

Power: A Metaphor. A metaphor of building a physical structure has shaped and expressed my thinking about teachers and students interacting in classrooms. I imagine students and teachers as enclosing rooms or spaces in which they can act independently and influence the actions of others, building areas off to the side of the main structure where they can live and work without conflict with others, and sometimes seeking to build in areas where their plans and actions conflict with those of

other members. Most often, students and teachers seem reluctant to undertake this last sort of construction project, and prefer to build in areas where conflict does not arise. This preference can be attributed to the presence of a public agenda of cooperation. The name of the structure that students and teachers build is "What Teachers and Students Can Do Here."

Invisible structures. I observed that one of the ways teachers cloak an agenda of control by promoting a vision of cooperation and shared effort is by trying to organize their classrooms so that their control activities are invisible. An activity that is invisible, as Hustler and Payne (1982) point out, is one that students will find hard to challenge. Conversely, students sometimes seem to be trying to make the teachers' control activities visible, and thus to open them up to challenge.

One of the resources that teachers have in maintaining the agenda of public cooperation is to build part of the structure before the students arrive, preempting building space before conflicts can arise. This can be done through their structuring of time and space in the classroom. Such invisible building can be seen in terms of both the physical arrangements of the room and the kinds of activities that are provided.

This aspect of teacher work is discussed in the literature on classroom management. Such authors as Brophy (1983), Cangelosi (1988), Duke (1982), Edwards (1993), Froyen (1993), Lemlech (1988), and Morine-Dershimer (1985), stress the

importance of "preventing problems," or "being proactive" in classroom discipline, and part of what they mean by this is organizing space and time in the classroom to promote classroom order. Doyle (1990) points out that while in the past much of the focus of classroom management literature has been on the treatment of disruptive situations and students, today there is a greater emphasis on advance planning of classroom organization.

On the other hand, the importance of these aspects of teacher's organization of classrooms is often overlooked by more discourse-oriented analysts like McDermott and Roth (1978), Cazden (1988), and Mehan (1979), whose work is relied on in other parts of the larger study from which this paper is derived. For them, classroom structures and power relationships are created in the interactions of classroom talk; teacher actions away from the students are not studied.

Sources and methods. This paper arises from ethnographic observations of three elementary classrooms, two fifth grades and a first grade. Although the study was not a complete ethnography of the classrooms, its core was intensive observation of classroom interactions and close analysis of videotapes of two of the classrooms. In addition, the videotapes were used for stimulated-recall interviews with two of the classroom's teachers in order to obtain their points of view on classroom events. The third classroom's teacher was also interviewed at length.

Data came from three public school classrooms. One was a fifth grade classroom in an urban school, studied in Spring 1989

while Courtney Bridgestone, a student teacher, was having her field experience there, under the tutelage of Aileen Corvo, a teacher with over twenty years' experience. Sunny Kaminski, a teacher who was in her fifth year at a rural school, taught in the first-grade classroom, studied in Fall 1989 and Spring 1990. The second fifth grade classroom, in a suburban community, was observed in Fall 1992 and Winter 1993. This teacher had twenty years of classroom experience. All the teachers were white women; each classroom included students from several ethnic groups and economic backgrounds. Because the analysis of data from the second fifth-grade classroom is not complete, examples are not always given from that classroom.

The method of analysis was based on a review of the literature of classroom interaction. From this review, a list of questions about potential interactional resources in the development of power relationships was developed. Videotapes and field notes were reviewed repeatedly, seeking instances of the use of such resources by students and teachers. A catalogue of such uses was developed from the fifth-grade data, and the material from the first-grade classroom was used to validate those observations. Later, material from the second fifth-grade classroom was incorporated. The broad categories which emerged in the analysis included the organization of space and time in the classroom; interactions in the classroom, including the discourse strategies chosen by teachers and students; and the control of what counts as knowledge in the classroom. Although

there were some differences of emphasis, substantial similarities were found among the three classrooms in the three categories.

The physical arrangement of the classrooms and the teacher's choice of what kinds of activities should fill the classroom day had strong effects on the kinds of behaviors in which students were able to engage. The first fifth-grade classroom was arranged so that students had little opportunity to move about and were discouraged from directing their gaze or their attention away from the teacher standing in front of the chalkboard. In the other two classrooms, much more physical freedom was afforded to the students by the arrangement of classroom space, and they made use of it. The classrooms also differed in the amount of time that the teachers devoted to highly structured, as opposed to more loosely structured, activities. Yet it was clear (based on both observations of and interviews with the teachers) that in every case the arrangements the teacher had made were consonant with her beliefs about how children can best learn, and therefore were enactments of her agenda to control student actions in order to facilitate student learning.

Organization of classroom time and space

In most classrooms, the organization of classroom time and space is the prerogative of the teacher. In the first two classrooms I observed, as in most classrooms, teachers kept this resource firmly in their own hands; in the third classroom, the teacher turned over to the students some control of the way space

was used. Inevitably, students find ways to resist teacher control of time and space, and those will be discussed later.

Physical arrangements. In Aileen Corvo's fifth-grade classroom, where Courtney Bridgestone is the student teacher, the physical arrangements discourage students from moving around the room and from interacting with other students. The room is relatively small and contains three lab tables which are fixed in place along one long side of the room. The desks are crowded together in pairs, facing the chalkboard, on both sides of a narrow central aisle. They are arranged so that the teacher has only a narrow space at the front of the room in which to move about while she is instructing the class. Access to the room's door is only available by passing through this "teacher zone," so that exit from the room is tightly controlled. It seems highly improbable that anyone could run or chase another person in this space, and indeed the data contain no instances of such events. In fact, one can only move about by picking one's way carefully between the seats. Students walk slowly even when movement is permitted.

Except for students in adjacent desks, conversation between students can only take place if someone turns all the way around in order to talk, or speaks across the center aisle. The arrangement of the desks makes clear that the only legitimate place to focus one's attention is on the teacher standing at the chalk board.

Furthermore, three of the most difficult students, from

Aileen Corvo's point of view, have "isolated seats," which cut them off even more completely from communication with other students. Hugh's desk is placed between the chalkboard and the first lab table, Lewis' between the first and second lab tables, and Donald's at the other side of the room, with his back to the rest of the students. When they are complying with the teacher's wishes, and when group instruction is taking place, the three boys are allowed to sit in vacant seats in the regular rows; if they do not comply, and during seatwork, they may be returned to their "isolated seats" (as Aileen Corvo calls them).

The message which Aileen Corvo's room arrangement sends is that no one needs to move, no one needs to look at anything but the front of the room, no one needs to talk to anyone except the teacher. (Cf. Tyack, 1974. pp. 82-3.)

The physical arrangements of Sunny Kaminski's first grade classroom, on the other hand, are aimed a making possible the many choices which are offered there. The easel and the block play area are the only parts of the room which are not set up to permit multiple and flexible uses. No one has a desk, or any permanent spot in which to be at any particular time. Each child has two cubbies, one for personal possessions and one for ongoing work. However, the appropriate use of the various parts of the room is stressed: the reading area for reading, the block area for block play, the tables for a variety of writing and manipulative activities, the rug for reading or listening to audio tapes, and so forth.

Ms. Kaminski moves around the room during large parts of the day, perching on tables, pulling up chairs, standing beside shelves. During sharing time, the students gather on the rug for a joint activity -- the closest they come to direct instruction. At this time, Ms. Kaminski sits in her rocking chair on the rug more often than in any other spot, but during my fourteen observations of sharing time she also sat on the table near the window, on one of the round tables near the rug, and on a child-size chair, as well as on the floor with the students. She said in several interviews that she believes that choice and flexibility actively promote learning; so all this flexibility can be seen as, almost ironically, a way she has of controlling children to promote learning.

Generally, though, in Ms. Kaminski's room the physical arrangements are far less in conflict with student agendas of independent action than are those in Ms. Corvo's room. The contribution of the room's arrangement to the building of a power relationship, while real, is not as a rule an area of conflict between teacher and children.

The first thing I noticed on entering Sue Anderson's fifth-grade classroom is how large it is. Her suburban school was built with an eye to spaciousness. In fact, I attended a movie showing in one of the adjacent classrooms at which over 60 children filled the room -- sitting on all the chairs, the carpet, the counters under the windows and across the back of the room. The room seemed full but not crowded.

This spaciousness makes it easier to arrange and rearrange the room, which contains about 25 portable desks and chairs, a teacher desk, three round tables, and a Danish-style couch, as well as bookcases and built-in counters. Sue and her students rearrange the room at least once a month; if things are going well, it is up to the students to decide how to arrange the desks, in groups or circles or rows, and where to put the tables and the couch. Sue's desk and storage area are permanently placed in a far corner of the room. If Sue feels that things are not going well, if she is finding it hard to get and keep the students' attention when she needs it, she might decree rows, and line up the desks in a fairly traditional manner. This is intended, she says, as a signal to the students that she is exerting more control, even though it never seems to interfere with individual students' regular opportunities to find a different place to work -- at a table, on the couch, at an empty desk -- when they want to.

Through the winter months, Sue's students take turns in groups at creating a "habitat" around the couch. Small friendship groups of two to four students can use the couch and, if they choose, a couple of desks and a table to create a "private" area. During many parts of the day, the group is allowed to work or relax in their habitat, rather than remaining at their desks or using other spaces in the room. A number of groups bring in a portable stereos, which they may use during breaks. Two girls who are close friends bring in numerous

stuffed animals, pillows, quilts, and blankets, and create a barrier of blanket-covered tables -- under which they can curl up with a stuffed toy -- around the couch.

After lunch two or three times a week, it is time to practice spelling words. The students form pairs for this task, and Sue encourages them to choose both a way of practicing and a suitable place to practice. Some pairs find a spot at the chalkboard and take turns writing and erasing the words. Others find a quiet corner and quiz one another orally. Still others settle at a table, and take turns writing the words on paper.

Sometimes it is at Sue's request that the arrangement of the room is changed; one day I come in to find all the desks pushed out of the way, and the students sitting in a large circle on the carpeted floor, discussing the book they are reading as a class.

Sue says she believes that students' learning is enhanced when they feel they are in control of their environment. It is for that reason that she encourages them to make choices about the arrangement of space in the room. Although Sue has increased the amount of choice with respect to ways of learning and ways to express learning that she offers in her room, she continues to include many teacher-directed, whole-class, and non-choice activities. This fact, I think, supports the idea that the apparent freedom of the students in organizing space is part of Sue's strategy for enacting her agenda of control of student behavior to enhance their learning.

Structure of activities. Just as the organization of space

can be an invisible resource in the teacher's efforts to enact her agenda for the classroom, so the activities in which the class engages may be designed to reduce the visibility of the teacher's contribution to power relationships and the opportunity for student contributions. One of the ways available to teachers to reduce the extent to which students can contribute to the development of power relationships is to devote classroom time to highly structured activities which allow little opportunity for interactional work to take place. Such activities include seat work (the completion of worksheets and the like), oral reading, and other standardized group activities.

The function of these kinds of structured activities is most apparent in Ms. Corvo's classroom. Four mornings a week the first thing that happens in the official school day is a lesson lasting about 15 minutes, or about 15% of the total language arts time for the day, that is a highly structured interaction with a spelling or vocabulary list. This activity begins when the teacher moves to her prescribed position for the lesson. When either Ms. Bridgestone or Ms. Corvo stands in front of the room on the side away from the door at this time, student bodies can be seen locking into the correct position, with feet under desks, faces to the front, hands ready to write either a test or notes, and voices silent. No verbal cue needs to be given for this to happen.

In this same class, oral reading predominates in the observed lessons, with about 30 per cent of most of the language

arts periods devoted to it. Nearly every day, Ms. Bridgestone or Ms. Corvo says something like, "Take out your Cybil War. We're on p. 47." Students respond to this direction not only by getting out the book and opening it to the prescribed page, but also by arranging their bodies according to the rules for oral reading. At this time they are allowed to assume some comfortable position in their seats, resting head or elbow on the desk or leaning back in the chair, but they are to face the front of the classroom, have their feet under their desks, and have their books open and their eyes on their books. This requirement is made explicit in one particular instance:

> CB: Peter, turn around and put your feet under your desk. It will help to keep you from talking.
> Peter: I wasn't talking.
> CB: I know, but it would help you not to talk any more.

Even though this class has what its teachers describe as severe behavior problems, at these ritual times there is rarely a need to tell the students what to do or correct their behavior. The teacher has succeeded in invisibly promoting her agenda of student control and enhanced learning.

In Sunny Kaminski's classroom, this teacher strategy of providing "seamless" (Griffin and Mehan, 1981) activities gets very little use. Much of the day is spent in situations in which the children choose their activities, their locations, and their actions from a wide range of acceptable choices. Thus it was possible to observe in her room some of the results of not providing the structured activities that predominated in Ms.

Corvo's classroom.

When the class comes together on the rug as they do periodically throughout the day, the amount of structure is greater, and certainly there are more rules. Some of these rules are: Be on the rug; Have your hands empty unless you are holding something that you will share; Do not sit on a chair; Sit up; Do not talk when it is someone else's turn. According to Ms. Kaminski, she discussed these rules at length with the children in the first few days of school. However, they are far less confining than the rules for, say, oral reading in Ms. Corvo's room, and furthermore they are constantly being broken, often because Ms. Kaminski believes that a particular child will benefit more from breaking a rule than from keeping it. They do have a sort of general application, and are quoted regularly to deal with children who are interfering with the activity of the moment, but there is no sense that it is important to enforce them consistently.

As a result, when Ms. Kaminski does elect to provide a quite structured activity, it takes considerable work to make it happen.

> Ms. Kaminski sits down at a table with a group of children who have been gathered there because they are those least sure of their ABC's. Each of the children has a copy of the same ABC book.
> SK: Please turn to the A page.
> Carlton does not comply.
> SK: (pauses) Please turn to the A page.
> Carlton wants to stay on the page he reached when he started looking through the book as soon as he sat down. SK reaches over and turns his book to the right page. She tries to organize a sort of round robin in which each person will read one letter and the thing it

stands for in order around the table.
SK: (beginning) A is for Apple.
There is quite a lot of resistance to this plan. No one seems to want to cooperate.
SK: Would you like to do it [go through the ABC book] by yourselves?
Voices: Yes.
Juana is going through the book. Jimmy may not know the letters well enough to do this on his own. Charles is rocking his chair to see if he can fall over backwards. I don't see him look at the book. But when Ms. Kaminski asks if they are finished he says yes, and she gives him and others who are finished another ABC book to look at. After a few minutes, Ms. Kaminski collects the second set of ABC books.
SK: OK, now, everyone turn back to the first page and we'll sing the ABC song.
Juana is slow to turn to the right page. They go through the ABC book, singing the song.
SK: Now let's go through just one more time and say it.
Now they go through the book taking turns as she first wanted them to do. Everyone is able to read her or his assigned letter and identify the related picture.
SK: Good, good job, we're reading the book all the way through.

In the end, Ms. Kaminski achieves the small structured activity she had planned, but it does not just click into place as it might in Ms. Corvo's room. On the other hand, what substituted for it was other desirable choices (from Ms. Kaminski's point of view). Children were engaged in appropriate learning activities concerning the alphabet letters. Ms. Kaminski probably would have considered the activity a success even if the last part (when the students carried out her original agenda for the group) had not happened.

This incident highlights an important exercise of "invisible power" in Ms. Kaminski's room. The children here have choices, rather than being coerced by a seamless structure of events, but the choices are almost always between Ms. Kaminski's

alternatives, and the choices are there precisely because Ms. Kaminski believes that children learn better when they are making choices. Ms. Kaminski has, through her planning of the day, created a structure that controls student behavior and, she believes, enhances student learning, even though it looks very different from the "seamless" structure created by Ms. Corvo.

Student resistance to structured activities. Students also find ways to resist the organizational structures that teachers develop in classrooms. The requirements associated with the highly structured activities found in a room like Ms. Corvo's are so explicit, and the "seams" into which the students can insert their own words and actions are so few, that it is relatively difficult for students to make their own contributions to power relationships at these times. This is not to say, however, that there are not a number of things that students can do as they pick at the "seams." As a rule, these actions are on a small scale, but when added together they may interfere seriously with the teacher's agenda.

For one thing, students can misunderstand what the teacher has said, or wants them to do. (Cf. Cazden [1988], who identifies this as one of the ways students contributed to power relationships in her classroom.) For example:

> During a spelling test:
> Donald: Is that idea or ideal?
> CB: Ideal.
> [N.B. This is a test on a spelling list that they have been studying for a week, including writing out the words 5 times each, and 10 times if a word was missed on the pretest.]

A few minutes later:

Donald: What?
CB: Station.

At the beginning of a spelling test:
Marlon: What unit?
CB: Stadium.
Marlon: No, what unit?
CB: Twenty-five.
LaToya: You can see it on the board.

At the beginning of the reading time:
CB: Take out your Cybil War. We're on page 43.
Voices: 38? What page? What page did you say we're on? Did we have this for homework?

Students can also slip out of an activity's constraints as it ends.

The transition after the spelling test is signalled by the teacher:
CB: V-a-c-u-u-m. Anybody else? Save the paper; you can use it to study from.
Immediately things just seem to break loose. Three students are out of their seats, two are shooting wads of paper into the trash can, and numerous voices can be heard, in contrast to the control and silence of the last 10 minutes.

Ms. Bridgestone has handed the students a worksheet to complete. The students are focused on it and the room is quiet for a few minutes. But as they begin to complete it, there is more noise. Hugh and LaToya are rubbing their pencils on the edge of their desks to sharpen them. There is a parade of students to the pencil sharpener and to the waste basket. Terrell turns around to talk to Walter.

Students can wiggle silently during an activity or push the limits of "sitting in a seat." Sometimes as many as half a dozen students of the 20 or so present in Ms. Corvo's room are wiggling or tapping.

LaToya taps, wiggles, and sits crooked, half off her chair.

Andrew is twitching his leg, and June her foot.

June, Andrew, and James are all twitching.

Marlon is on his feet, leaning on his desk. His behind is in the air, but his face is right in his book on the desk, and it appears that he is reading.

Another possibility is for students simply to tune out, to withdraw their attention and their energy. This may mean a day-dreaming kind of inattention, or covert involvement in some other activity.

Lewis is in and out of the book. Sometimes he is in for ten seconds or out for twenty seconds. He taps the book on his knee. He hasn't turned a page for a long time. I suspect he does not know where they are in the book.

Darin has his head down on his desk and his eyes closed.
Darin is rolling his head around on his desk, not even pretending to be looking at the book.

Lewis is sitting so that he appears to be looking at the book, but I can see his eyes and they are all over the room. He yawns.

The three students who are most out of it are Rosie, Darin, and Lewis. Lewis is constantly shifting his attention in and out of the room, in and out of the book, inspecting his forearm, fooling with a rubber band. Darin seems spaced out, staring into space, or nearly asleep with his head on his desk. Rosie sits up, holds the book in front of her and has her eyes in that direction. She does a good imitation of someone who is on task. But she rarely turns a page or responds to the content of the book (sad or humorous) or to the discussion.

Keiyon is filling in a workbook page which he is holding in his lap so that his desk hides what he is doing from the teacher.

Another possibility, one which places the student to at least some extent in the role of the teacher, is to assist another student who has made an error.

Rosie reads with extreme difficulty. She reads "taking" for "talking."
LaToya: [quietly] Talking.
Rosie repeats, "talking," and goes on.
Soon Andrew helps her in the same way.

Hugh reads. He misreads the word "contestant," and murmurs of correction can be heard from around the group.
Andrew reads. He stumbles on the word "gratitude" and LaToya turns to him and supplies the word.

A relatively radical possibility, one which many of the students never choose, is simply to get up and move.

LaToya gets up during oral reading and goes to the trash can.
CB: Sit down, LaToya.
LaToya complies with obvious irritation.

Lewis gets up and goes to the pencil sharpener.
CB: No, Lewis, not now.
Lewis turns back to his seat with a disgusted look.

A last possibility is for the student to call out comments on what is being said or done. This can be done either loudly enough for the entire class and the teacher to hear or <u>sotto voce.</u>

Ms. Corvo is giving a spelling test. She reads each word, and then gives a sentence using the word. Each of the sentences is related to these students and this classroom. [AC: Produce. In writing workshop you like to <u>produce</u> nice work.] Someone calls out a response to one of the sentences.
AC: Let's not call out.

Ms. Corvo has asked the class for responses to a question about Sadako, the hero of the novel they are reading.
Paul: Sadako loves to run and believes in good luck charms.
Andrew: [softly] She runs like the wind.
Keiyon: She does not. The wind doesn't run.

Student development of interactional space. Much more often, students keep their actions out of the arena of conflict,

just as the teacher does. They perform the actions through which they accomplish their agendas in areas where conflict with teachers is not so direct. One of the implications of this student maintenance of the public agenda of cooperation is that as soon as the students think they are not being watched, their level of interaction and action rises substantially.

> Ms. Corvo is at the front of the room, speaking to the students. She goes to the back of the room to get something she needs from her desk. At once many of the kids start to fool around. Walter and Terrell are dueling with their pencils. LaToya is punching Terrell in the arm. The noise level rises as students all over the room start to talk.
>
> Ms. Bridgestone is getting ideas from students and writing them on the chalkboard. Every time she turns her back the noise level rises.

In Ms. Corvo's classroom, though, these are small slices of opportunity; students are usually under the teacher's gaze.

In Ms. Kaminski's room, on the other hand, there is so much going on in the room, so many things, so many children moving around actively almost all the time, that it does not seem to be possible for the adults (Ms. Kaminski, the aide, the student teacher, and any volunteers who may be present) to see what all the children are doing all the time. This is especially likely because these adults usually see their role as one of being actively involved in promoting learning with one or more children, rather than being in a supervisory role. Thus there is a lot of interactive, as well as physical, space which could be described as being around the edges of adult attention, and students do use that space.

Most of the time, a majority of the students, just as in Ms. Bridgestone's room, are doing what they are supposed to be doing. In this room that means that at free choice time they are engaged with one of the acceptable choices, at readers' workshop time they are engaged in some way with a book, and at writers' workshop time they are writing. When they are supposed to be sitting on the rug and listening, most of them are. But it is also true that most of the time someone is not complying, and most of the children are that someone during some part of the time.

For example, during my first observation in the classroom, the following events occur during readers' workshop:

> One boy in the library corner is kicking another with big shoes. The other sits up and punches him, which seems to end the problem. No one else seems to notice this.
>
> One boy has the squeaky raccoon puppet and is playing noisily with it on the rug.
>
> There is tickling and rolling around on the rug.
>
> One boy is playing noisily on the rug with Mandy, who has a book. The two push one another and he makes loud, silly noises.
>
> Buster is sitting on the rocking chair and scooting it around the rug.

Nothing harmful goes on, but there is a good deal happening that does not fit in with adult intentions for this time -- that everyone is interacting with printed material in some way that will promote learning. Later in the year, as expectations become more established and more children feel able to engage productively with written matter, there is less going on at any

one time -- but usually something going on.

There was one incident in Ms. Kaminski's room when a student tried to manipulate directly the teacher's prerogative of creating the physical environment. In this incident, the teacher has created a space which is called "computer signup list." Carlton attempts to change that space:

> It is early in the morning. Carlton arrives and shows off his ice cream money to some kids. Ms. Kaminski has written the words COMPUTER SIGNUP on the chalkboard behind the computer. Below the words, Nathaniel and Nick have written their names, indicating that they will be the first two to use the computer. Nathaniel is using the computer and Nick is watching him. It appears that Carlton will have to be third. But he gets a chair, pulls it up to the chalkboard, stands on it, and writes his name <u>above</u> the words COMPUTER SIGNUP. He gets down and tries to push Nathaniel out of the way, saying:
> Carlton: I'm first.
> The student teacher comes over and reminds Carlton that they talked about this yesterday and he can't just push in. Carlton pulls up a chair to the computer and supervises Nathaniel as he continues to work.

Sometimes it is evident that children are aware that they are or may be outside the parameters of acceptable behavior.

> The hall door is open and a child goes by yelling. Several boys are at the door, and seem to want to go out in the hall. One of them turns around and appears to be checking to see if anyone is watching. He catches my eye, and though I try not to respond he turns and comes away from the door.

> During free choice time, Ms. Kaminski goes over to the rug and puts the Good Morning tape on the player. She goes back to the paint area. Noah and another boy get out rhythm instruments and Andra is singing along. Noah is playing the tambourine pretty loud. He looks around apprehensively. Are there negative reactions to what he is doing? No, and he goes on playing.
> Ms. Kaminski moves toward him. Noah sees her and stops playing.
> SK: That's all right. I'm not saying no. I'm just smiling at you.

Even though in these cases the students were barely outside or not outside adult limits on their actions, their awareness of whether they are under adult scrutiny is clear.

Sometimes this activity outside of adult supervision takes the form of withdrawal of attention and acceptance, especially during group times.

> The children are gathered in the library corner to be shown the new books that have been put out. Ms. Kaminski is standing to one side, holding up books and talking to the students. More or less behind her, Thad is crawling around on the floor, scooting a little wad of paper around. He is obviously paying no attention to what is happening on the rug. After about four minutes, Ms. Kaminski seems to notice him for the first time and tells him to join the group on the rug.
>
> Ms. Kaminski chooses Mandy to read aloud. Buster and Pearl are sitting next to each other on the rug. They have a magazine and are reading or looking at it.
> SK: Pearl...
> A few moments later Pearl is still reading the magazine while Mandy reads aloud.

In both the classrooms, students' contributions to the construction of power relationships are usually quite direct. They seem to seek either to develop spaces within the teacher-built structure in which they can act freely, or to develop spaces in which the teachers must act according to their wishes. Occasionally, they are attempting to upset the teachers' strategies of indirection and invisibility in order to make possible a direct conflict over the teachers' agenda.

Summary and Implications

With respect to classroom organization of time and space, teachers have an institutional role allowing them to make major

contributions to power relationships through their organization of time and space. Their arrangements of classroom space send powerful messages about what is meant to take place in classrooms. The amount of structure built into the learning activities available in classrooms also shapes power relationships effectively. Highly structured activities limit the amount of interactional work that can take place, and therefore the opportunities that students have to contribute to power structures in classrooms.

Nevertheless, students do find ways to resist teacher control over time and space, to create "seams" in environments and activities and to use them to make their own contributions to power relationships.

The definition of power relationships proposed here, namely, that they are a structure named "What Teachers and Students Can Do Here," endows them with the potential to be a central concept in understanding what happens in classrooms. Still, the reflexivity which is one of the most salient characteristics of power relationships ensures that any description of them can only be momentarily valid. To speak of <u>the</u> power relationship in a classroom or in classrooms would be to ignore this essential quality of being visible only as a single moment of present time.

Reflecting on my past elementary school teaching, I can see that my confusion about the conflicting agendas I was promoting was a source of problems for me and my students. I taught

preschool for four years and kindergarten for seven, and found myself in a quandary as to my own power in the classroom. I did not want to see myself as a powerful teacher; I wanted to see myself as friend and helper to "my kids."

On the other hand, the schools where I taught, their principals, my fellow teachers, and indeed I myself had definite expectations that children would act in prescribed ways. They would not hurt one another (or the teachers). They would cooperate about matters like moving from one room to another, using the bathrooms without supervision, putting outdoor clothes away. When activities were over, they would clean up after themselves. When group activities were planned, they would pay attention and not interfere with others. Also we expected that they would participate in activities through which they would learn.

Since I was so uncomfortable with the idea of being powerful in the classroom, even while I held these expectations, I naturally moved as much of my power as possible into indirect and invisible modes. If there were things that children had to do, those things would be so well-planned and so much fun that they would <u>want</u> to do them. Learning activities would involve many choices among good alternatives that would let children feel that they were choosing what to do. Group activities like reading aloud and singing would be so interesting, so well-done, that they would keep the children's attention without coercion. If children had to clean up, routines would be established, advance

warnings given, and storage systems simplified. Most of all, I would always, always speak politely and gently to the children--even while telling them what to do.

To some extent this effort to move "classroom management" into the realm of indirection and invisibility was conscious even then, though I think I understand it even better now. Most of the time it was highly effective. Yet in the last year I taught, I worked with a group of students who were less than willing to let my invisible power work on them, and it was a hard year for us. Several of these children had been giving their teachers a hard time for a full year, and they had some highly effective moves of their own in the arena of power. If it was not quite true to say that they coordinated their efforts, it was certainly true that they were skilled at choosing the moment when one of them had the full attention of teacher and class to do something that somebody had to pay attention to.

I redoubled my efforts to keep my control over them invisible; they were inevitably successful in bringing issues to the surface. This research has given me a better understanding of that confusion and discomfort.

Now, as I work with experienced teachers in a master's program, I see how exploring the sources of classroom power relationships and understanding what resources they have in developing them can be of value to the teachers. They can learn to weigh their choices more thoughtfully and perhaps promote their agendas more successfully. By understanding the ways in

which power relationships are constructed in classrooms, they can adjust their expectations of themselves and their students to be more realistic, and thus may reduce the stress and confusion that many teachers feel.

I also know that when I walk into a graduate classroom and immediately start to rearrange chairs and tables for the evening's interaction, I am making an important contribution to power relations in my classes. As many choices as the teachers I work with have, I claim this as my prerogative. Understanding this, I understand better the interaction between me and my students.

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